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BLM Director Abbey, Forest Service Chief Tidwell Host *America's Great Outdoors* Initiative Listening Session in Grand Junction

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. — Bureau of Land Management Director Bob Abbey and U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell today held a public listening session as part of President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors* initiative to develop a conservation agenda for the 21st century.

The listening session, one of a series taking place across the country, gave an opportunity to citizens to discuss ways local communities are meeting the challenges of modern-day land conservation and the importance of reconnecting Americans to the outdoors.

"The goal of the America's Great Outdoors initiative is to develop 21st century solutions to the 21st century conservation challenges that are affecting our landscapes from population growth to habitat fragmentation to climate change," Abbey said. "If we are to succeed, we must work hand-in-hand with communities across our country to find new ways of restoring and conserving our land and connecting people to nature."

"America's Great Outdoors Initiative provides a great opportunity for kids and adults alike from all walks of life to explore and enjoy our national forests," said USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "We especially hope to see a lot of first-time visitors to our forests and grasslands to instill a sense of pride and ownership of our country's diverse landscapes and resources."

President Obama inaugurated the *America's Great Outdoors* Initiative at the White House Conference on the Great Outdoors in April. The conference brought together leaders from communities across the country that are working to protect their outdoor spaces and focused on developing and supporting innovative ideas for improving conservation and recreation at the local level.

In a Presidential Memorandum, he called on the Secretaries of the Interior and of Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality to lead the initiative, in coordination with the Departments of Defense, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, Transportation, Education, and the Office of Management and Budget.

From coast to coast, ranchers, farmers, sportsmen, conservationists, state and local government leaders, tribal leaders, public lands experts, youth leaders, business representatives have been attending listening sessions as a part of a national dialogue about conservation that will lead to greater support for the conservation efforts of private citizens and local communities.

For more information on the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, please visit:

<http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors>.

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